"It Was a Dirty Shame to Stop the War—"

By Harlan Thompson

HE HAD two major claims to distinction. The more obvious one was that he was probably the first American citizen to get into the world war. The other, certainly the more interesting, was that in him Bernard Shaw's "Chocolate Soldier" came into actual being. A Bluntschli with modernizations, naturally, but as true to type temperamentally as if he had just stepped out of "Arms and the Man."

We were with him in the last weeks of it, which was fortunate, for there was none left who had been his friend in the first week—at Mons and afterward. He told about those friends that had been, and of going through it all himself without even a scratch, with a grimness that could not keep out a touch of enjoyment. It was the vindication of his "chocolate soldier" theories.

He happened to be in Paris when the war broke out. His home was in Boston and his regular job in the interior of Morocco, but he had just finished driving a car in a road race to Constantinople and back for the fun of the thing.

When the war was two days old he and several friends of assorted citizenships met to see what was to be done about it. They decided it couldn't go on without them, and when some one suggested that the British army would do as well as any, and that it was supposed to be landing on the Belgian coast, they caught the first train in a body and hunted it up.

The British army didn't want them particularly, having other things to occupy its attention, but it took them in. Le Blanc—not that it matters, but that is his name—was made a sergeant and put in charge of the others because he could speak French and German.

On the way across Belgium somebody found out about the road race, so he went through the Battle of Mons and the retreat as a motorcycle dispatch rider. Then came the first terrible winter in the trenches.

It was about this time that there came to him the realization that the soldier who does his job without getting killed in doing it is a better soldier than the foolhardy one who doesn't last long enough to be of any use.

He may have gained his first ideas in self-preservation before the war through being a neighbor of the bandit Raisuli in Morocco. Raisuli's neighbors had opportunities for education along those lines. He may have picked up other pointers from fighting beside Major d'Espery against the natives, who were always ambushing one in the desert or penning one up in a consulate or giving way to their feelings in one way or another. The major must have picked up some ideas, too, to judge from his good work later as commander in chief at Saloniki.

At any rate, Le Blanc soon had abundant instances to bear out his theory. It seemed that many of his comrades were possessed of the liveliest curiosity as to whether the Germans were still occupying the trenches across the way.

Every so often one of them would feel that he simply must know about those Germans. Thereupon he would stick his head up and look over to see what they were doing. Whereupon, Le Blanc noticed, the Germans displayed a well defined tendency to shoot a hole in that particular head.

Temperament in The Fight

If he had any such overpowering interest in the doings of the Hun the result of his observations taught him to restrain it. When he wanted a look he went to a sniper's post or used a periscope. It wasn't much extra trouble and it saved the digging they were always having to do for the ones who looked when they felt like it.

He found the idea had its advantages, too, in going over the top. He was struck by the dissimilarity in the methods of the Tommy and the Poilu. His French ancestry may have made him incline toward the latter's ways, although the chances are that it was his common sense.

The British, he noticed, climbed out of the trenches quite coolly when the time came, formed in straight lines and plodded along behind their barrage. When gaps began to come in their ranks it made no difference as far as the disinterested plodding was concerned.

With the French it was another matter. Before the zero hour every man in the trench was aquiver with suppressed excitement. They walked up and down, a little each way; they examined their rifles again and again; they chewed their lips without knowing it. When they went over there were no straight lines. Every man was on his own. Every man took advantage of whatever shelter he could find. He darted from one shell hole to another, then behind a shattered tree trunk, then behind a little rise in the ground, but always keeping up with the barrage.

It was a difference in temperament that showed in the statistics when the losses were counted. Not that Le Blanc was interested in statistics just then; he was figuring out safety first tactics in bayonet fighting, ways in which you could kill the most Germans while they were killing the least of you.

He was successful enough at it to be given a commission and a platoon. More wearing months in the trenches went by before there came a need at headquarters for men who could speak French perfectly and who were familiar with the adjacent country. As he had spent some years in northern France and had friends in many of the towns he was one of those finally selected.

After a period of instruction in map reading and other courses they were ready for their work—that of gathering information back of the German lines. Only volunteers had been chosen. It was not looked on as particularly safe work.

Le Blanc, however, saw no reason why it should be especially hazardous. As a "chocolate soldier" he found it rather tempting. Surely it would be far more comfortable than the trenches. They were to live in a château near headquarters—had been living there, in fact, with beds and tablecloths and bathtubs and the most unheard of things. The only uncomfortable part of it had been when they had started to practise parachute jumping.

It was the plan of the staff to send them over the lines in airplanes, have them jump out at convenient spots, hide the parachutes

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on landing and then start out on their tasks.

Le Blanc tried it once in practice. He jumped, felt the mad rush of air past him as he fell, doubled up in a ball, shut his eyes and waited for the smash that was to be the end. It was overly long in coming. He waited a little longer, but was still alive. Finally he peaked out between his arms, and there was the parachute opened wide above him.

He landed safely, went back to headquarters and told the general that there would be no more parachute jumping as far as he was concerned. He was perfectly willing to be delivered behind the German lines by airplanes, but the parachute business did not accord at all with his idea of a well regulated life. He got his way.

It was the same with the disguises. What kind did he care to use? None, thank you. He would put on an enlisted man's uniform, take a rifle and a pack and be quite comfortable. He had an idea it would be far nicer so, in case he should happen to be caught. There were things they did to spies that were decidedly unpleasant, and a soldier in full uniform could not be considered a spy, no matter where found.

Probably it was just a little notion of his, but he felt it paid to look after the details. The staff wasn't sure it could be done, but it felt that in his position he had a right to be humored.

For almost a year he divided his time between the two sides of the front, always in uniform. In that time he was never seen by a German, although he watched whole armies of them from his hiding places. It was a pleasant life on the whole, especially when living at headquarters, and while the general opinion was that it was extremely hazardous, he couldn't see it that way.

The main thing was to run no unnecessary risks. If you were concealed in some bushes at the side of a lonely road and a big German soldier came along there might be a temptation, of course, to shoot him; even if only to relieve the monotony of the afternoon. Some of the fellows did that and got away with it; but while killing Huns was everybody's job just then all you could get that way wouldn't make any difference in the end, and there was always the chance there might be others around to make trouble. It paid to play safe.

And when you did play safe and correctly analyzed the situation you could do lots of things that at first thought seemed out of the question. For instance, on coming to a town at night the natural thing to do would be to sneak through alleys and fields lest any one should see you. But it was every bit as safe to march down the middle of the main street.

No one ever saw you if you did that. The inhabitants were all indoors with the shades drawn and the lights out. The Germans saw to it that you didn't meet any inquisitive civilians. Any one stirring out at night belonged to the military, especially any one walking boldly through the streets, and British hobnails sounded exactly the same on the pavement as German hobnails.

When Plans Went Wrong

It was a comfortable life, usually. If occasionally it was necessary to sleep out in the rain it was only occasionally. Most of the time there was shelter of a sort, and in the towns there was nearly always a place where one could go and knock in the right way and find friends and food and wine and, best of all, a bed with sheets.

There were uncomfortable times, too. For instance, when the day came on which one was due to go back, one went to a little point marked on the map and waited. If the weather was bad one waited all day and perhaps the next and the next. Once in an unusually bad season Le Blanc waited two weeks for his transportation to arrive. He says he was beginning to wonder a little whether there hadn't been some oversight in putting him down for a return ticket. It was a long and somewhat difficult route to walk.

Gathering information was not the only task. An offensive was planned on a certain sector. When it came the Germans would try to bring up men and supplies by a certain railroad. On this railroad was a long viaduct. What more natural than that one night a figure should begin crawling out upon the structure, past the unobservant landsturm guards; that a little later it should come crawling back, and that half an hour after that the centre span and a guard or two should start heavenward with a terrific roar and a dazzling flash of light?

The next afternoon in a little valley ten or fifteen miles away a throttled airplane slipped down quietly in between the trees and settled itself upon a smooth stretch of grass. The pilot clambered out and looked around. A man in khaki detached himself from the woods and came across to the machine. The pilot shut off his idling motor, greeted the newcomer, and each smoked a cigarette while they chatted. A glance over the machine, they crawled in; there was a burst of sound from the motor and they were roaring out over the trees. At some 5,000 feet a few minutes later they circled once to get a good picture of what had been the viaduct and then went home.

This life might have gone on indefinitely had not a staff general had an idea. If such useful information was being obtained from the occupied portion of France, why not extend the operations beyond the German border? Surely there were many things worth knowing there.

They told Le Blanc the plan. It was a fine plan, he agreed, but if they were expecting him to take part they would have to be disappointed. It was one thing to operate in a thoroughly familiar country, where the inhabitants were friendly, and quite another to go into a hostile region with maps the only guide. He had no objection to serving in any sensible capacity, but suicide was far, very far, from his thoughts.

The general took offence at that. It was a reflection upon his judgment in proposing it. He became disagreeable—and nothing can become so disagreeable as a general who makes up his mind to it. He has strategic disagreeable advantages that could never be possible in civil life.

The result was a natural one. Le Blanc, who had volunteered for the work, ceased to volunteer. The general sent for the others. They felt about it as Le Blanc did. The general was insistent. They also ceased to volunteer. The general was left alone with his excellent plan.

Many Hours In the Air

The uncomfortable trenches were coming uncomfortably near again. Le Blanc took counsel with himself. The trenches would never do if they could be avoided. In his journeys to and from Hunland he had spent many hours in the air. In fact he had picked up enough from his pilot friends to handle a bus pretty well. People said flying was dangerous, but it was awfully good sport and one had fairly decent quarters.

He went into the flying corps. There were many fliers there who did the things that corresponded to sticking their heads over the top to see if the Germans were still there. He found that there were ways of doing things sanely in the air that accomplished just as much as the mad ways, with the additional advantage of leaving the doer alive at the finish.

He could stunt as well as any of them, but when he rolled and looped there was either plenty of air between him and the ground or there was a Hun near enough to make it desirable to take chances. He knew his machine, what it could do and what it could not do. He knew the other fellow's machine. The game was to get the other fellow to make a mistake. There are few mistakes made in air fighting—by the same person.

He made it a point to be familiar with everything connected with the aerodrome. One day an inspector arrived and began looking over the machine. One of a superannuated type was unsafe for use, the inspector decided. It would have to be scrapped. It happened to be one that Le Blanc had flown. It was like losing an old friend. He told the inspector it was in good condition. The inspector thought otherwise.

Would the inspector care to take a flip and be shown? The inspector couldn't very well back out. They went up. In the cockpit was a notice that no machine of its type was to be looped. The wings were not equal to the strain. Le Blanc looped. Then he brought the inspector down white-faced.

The inspector was going to put him under arrest.

"But you said the bus was unsafe for ordinary flying," Le Blanc told him. "I took you up to show you that it was all right. It was all right, wasn't it?"

He was not arrested.

When the Yanks came over he decided that he wanted to change over to the American army. The only trouble was that all of his superiors, up to and including that which is so superior that it ceases to be personal, the War Office, decided against it. With every one in favor of it the red tape alone would have daunted most men. With the War Office under the impression that he was too valuable a man to lose, it was practically an impossibility. Yet he did it, and would have had his major's oak leaves if the armistice hadn't spoiled things.

Caviar to The General

In the midst of his campaign to change uniforms he came upon another general. Obstinate generals were getting to be rather an old story. This one was very obstinate.

Why did he want to go into the American army anyhow?

Because he was an American citizen for one thing.

But he had taken the oath of allegiance to Great Britain.

He begged the general's pardon, but he hadn't.

But he must have. No person could serve in the British army who had not done so.

Begging the general's pardon again, but at the time he joined the British army the British army was too much concerned in other matters to pay any attention to oaths of allegiance.

And how long was it since he had come out to France?

Well, it was some time before the general had come out.

Was it before Ypres?

It was before Mons.

Before Mons?

Yes, the war had been going on two days. And if the general would like to see this passport for him as a British officer, he had had to get it from the American authorities.

The general sputtered his amazement, but he approved the request. Le Blanc is going to miss his generals now that the thing is over.

He is also going to miss his war, for, besides formulating his "chocolate soldier" rules and regulations, he has acquired a most abiding hatred for the Hun. In the midst of the armistice celebrations he was a gloomy figure. He felt it was a dirty shame to stop the war just when it was going along so beautifully. He really was deeply hurt about it.

There was only one spark of hope in all of the news. That was that Rumania had just declared war on Germany. He wondered whether Rumania didn't need a first-class aviator for her flying corps—if she had one. Surely every one wasn't going to stop fighting. How was the situation in Mexico now? Wouldn't there be a chance of something opening up there before long?

One by one his hopes faded. It seemed that the Hun was going to get off easy in spite of all he could say. Of course there was Russia, but it was cold and uncomfortable in Russia, and one never could be sure of a good scrap even then.

When I left him he was becoming resigned to go back to Morocco to manage his company's properties again. He was going to take a machine along, his old bus, if he could get it. There would be no trouble about landing fields on the desert.

There was always a chance of interesting developments in Morocco. An airplane would be a mighty convenient thing to have around the house, especially when you're living next door to the Raisuli family.

First to Resume Work—The War-Made Mississippi Basin

By William R. Lighton

Well known interpreter of western spirit and opinion

AFTER war's chaos comes reconstruction. Not a mere restoration of the old, but the building of something new and better and more impregnable to disaster; something modern and strong, and more fit to serve the needs of the long, long future.

We shall have a hand in the reconstruction of those lands where the actual blight of war has fallen. That is an obligation we cannot avoid. The smoothing of the war-torn battlefields and their return to the uses of peace—there is very obvious need. But reconstruction is broader than that. It must touch every human activity the world over. Nothing—nothing can be the same hereafter as in the old days.

Our own greatest part in the new task will be here at home. Whatever helpful service we may render to stricken peoples overseas, it cannot possibly equal in importance the things we shall have to do in our own land. This is our job. Out of the raw material of isolated strength we are to build world power. Not world dominion, but power for world service. For that, we shall need to perfect ourselves, to pick up the loose ends of the past, to think in new terms, to know that we are forever done with the careless tricks of loutish immaturity.

Greatest and surest of the tasks of the new time is to be the industrial reconstruction of the Mississippi Basin. It is already begun in a fashion which gives an absolute pledge for the future. This region is not now surrendering itself to the mere ecstasies of vague prophetic vision; instead, it is concerned with achievement. It has had enough of rainbow chasing; it has set its hand now to bold, significant, successful performance.

It is altogether right to speak of this as reconstruction. What war has done in the devastation of the famous Lille Triangle has not been more complete than war-time's destruction of old industrial tradition in the Mississippi Basin. Upon the wreckage of that tradition the new structure is to be founded.

Here in this vast basin, from Ohio to Wyoming and from Minnesota to Louisiana, lie the sources of all national strength-producing powers. Twenty-one of the forty-eight states form this group. They aggregate 47 per cent of the land area of the United States. They contain 46 per cent of all population and more than 53 per cent of rural population. The centre of population is in southern Indiana. Seventy per cent of the improved farmland of the United States lies here, and 70 per cent of the money value of all farm property.

These states produce 65 per cent in value of all cultivated farm crops; 67 per cent of all livestock; 77 per cent of all swine; 62 per cent of all dairy cattle; 58 per cent of the wool; 84 per cent of all cereals; 80 per cent of the wheat, and 75 per cent of the sugar.

Not one centre of national production of raw wealth but lies in the heart of this basin—wheat, corn, oats; cattle, hogs, sheep; cotton, lumber, iron, coal, copper, lead, zinc, petroleum—the whole list, excepting oysters and codfish. These production centres are grouped in an unmistakable north-and-south line up and down the Mississippi.

A Great Artery Unused

And here within this basin, its vital artery, is the greatest of all the world's continental outlets to the sea, with free access to the markets of all the world.

If you will, imagine this vast volume of wealth in the interior basin as fluid and free, and it needs no imagination to discover that it would move by its own weight down the great valley to tidewater at the Gulf. There is transportation reduced to its simplest terms.

Add to all this the fact that within this basin lie unmeasured and all but immeasurable sources of the cheapest of all power for industrial use.

And yet, in real constructive industry based upon her own creation of raw wealth, this mighty region has always played a very squeaky and amateurish second fiddle. The constructive industry by which the nation is judged in the courts of the world lies beyond the rim of the basin. Commerce with the world in the finished products fashioned from the raw material provided by the interior is a business in which the interior has had only the meagrest share. The profit of that in dollars and cents has gone elsewhere; and, what is infinitely worse, the communities of the great basin have not gained that firmness and strength of civic fibre which has distinguished the industrial commonwealths of the East. The strength conferred by the higher forms of industry is not fanciful; in all ways it is very real.

In the years before the world war, the twenty-one states forming the Mississippi Basin, though they furnished so overwhelming a part of all raw materials, themselves delivered less than 40 per cent of the nation's manufactured products. And that 40 per cent included the products of the huge meat packing industry—leader of all in volume of business; it included the products of lumber mills—third in rank of all industries, according to volume of production; and it included flour milling, fifth in rank. These three industries, though their service is so vital, are hardly to be considered as constructive. Take these from the lists credited to the interior states, and their share in the nation's true constructive industry dwindles to almost negligible importance.

Consider a few particulars.

The state of Arkansas is the centre of the nation's cotton production, a crop which engages about 32,000,000 acres of land every year with a yield of about ten million 500-pound bales. This state itself plants more than 2,000,000 acres to cotton annually. Yet there is not one cotton spindle turning in Arkansas. Her people produce the fibre, send it to New England and buy back trainloads of New England made cotton fabrics, paying freight both ways.

A very large part of the native wealth of Arkansas lies in her vast forests of pine and hardwoods. Saw milling is the most important of her industries; finished woodworking is one of the least. She contents herself with exporting annually hundreds of trainloads of rough lumber and buying back most of the finished wood products she uses—paying freight both ways.

The Problem As Omaha Saw It

It is only about a dozen years since the people of Omaha began seriously to consider the matter of making that city a primary market for grain and wool and hides and other items on the list of raw materials produced in the wide territory of which she called herself the metropolis. To-day she is a primary market more in name than in substantial fact, in that she has done little toward basing other industries upon this raw material traffic. Excepting meat packing she has no industries matched to the volume of the flow of raw stuffs through her gates—none which figure in that significant column of industrial summaries "value added by manufacture." On a large scale that is merely the service of the middleman—profitable to the middleman who takes a charge for handling, passing the raw materials on unchanged to their ultimate markets; but only by the grace of an outworn industrial fiction may such service be considered a contribution to wealth. It adds to ultimate costs without adding at all to values.

It is, perhaps, unfair to Omaha to single her out from the multitude of interior cities for this implied criticism. Omaha's case is not unique; it is fairly illustrative of a very general condition of the very common illusion of past days, that the riches gained by traffic in raw materials stood for new created wealth. There was money in it, and so these scores of thrifty interior towns and cities continued gathering wool for export to remote textile centres, which would send it back presently as woollen fabrics and garments, continued gathering hides for the distant shoemaker, cotton for the far off loom, rough lumber for the cabinetmaker, whose shop lay half-way across the continent; skins for the New York glove maker, ores for the Pennsylvania smelter, continued supplying raw materials for the creative industries everywhere beyond the rim of this interior world and taking in exchange finished products for the needs of their own people.

Go west of the Mississippi to-day and, excepting a few foodstuffs, you will search long before you find an industry of any consequence whose output is a finished product. Measured by the scale of national production the whole volume of trans-Mississippi output is insignificant.

The long and short of it is that in the past this wide region of the interior has been furnishing the raw material upon which the constructive industry of New England and the Middle Atlantic states has grown great. The interior has surrendered the prestige, the profit and the pride which go with the higher forms of industrial performance. What is more, the interior has thus passed into the hands of the Eastern seaboard states all the prestige, profit and pride of world trade in finished products. Excepting always meat and flour and lumber and raw cotton, the world overseas knows just next to nothing of, because it has no contact with, this great basin of the Mississippi Valley states.

So it has been in the past. And why? There must be some sort of rough logic in it. Such conditions do not endure for a half century without pretty solid reason. In fact, it was inevitable that it should happen so—just as inevitable as the change now under way.

No More "The Predatory East"

The time is gone for foolish talk about a "predatory East," an East greedily fattening itself at the expense of a helpless West. That sort of talk served admirably for the heyday of Granger and Populist orators, who saw things with the perspective of one-eyed men and who solemnly proposed the impossible, deliberately undertaking to legislate constructive industries into existence and thus, as they were pleased to phrase it, "strike off the shackles of economic servitude." That was puerile argument; it ended as it began—in nothing. Fiat industries proved no more substantial than fiat money or fiat anything else. No legislative assembly, though it were picked from the world's masters in skilful lawmaking, could bring in an oil well by force of mere enactment in words. By the same token it couldn't establish a cotton mill or a steel forge or abort the great economic service of a railroad. All that had to work itself out in ways independent of the bill drafters. They found by and by that their obligation consisted simply in the making of such laws as would insure to industry a fair field and no favor. Then industry must build itself in its own good time.

Since the beginning of settlement of America the flood of immigration has found our Eastern coast, and progressive settlement of new lands has moved thence straight westward. Look at the maps and you will see that since 1790, when the national centre of population was at Baltimore, this centre has followed the 39th parallel to southern Indiana with almost mathematical exactness. From decade to decade for a century and a quarter there was not at any time a variation of one-half a degree from that line. The verse writer wasn't joking at all when he said "Westward the star of empire takes its way." He couldn't have made his statement any more exactly true if he had laid it out with compass and rule. The human tide of occupation set precisely westward, and it has known no shadow or turning.

When the days of railroad building came the railroads were built upon those lines. Of course! Their object was service. The builders were not engaged in boys' play. Step by step they kept pace with the movement of men.

Well, migration went on—always westward. The pioneers were, first of all, land hunters. Mere adventurers—a few; but so few that they didn't count. One common motive held those millions of men westward bound. Here was an all but inexhaustible treasure of fertile land free for the taking, and they wanted it.

After the first occupation came use—production—surplus of foodstuffs and of all manner of raw materials for human needs. The settlers were farmers, not artisans. They had raw hides, but they were not shoemakers or harness makers; they had forests of oak and pine, but they were not woodworkers; they found ores, but they were not metal workers; they were merely farmers. Save in the crudest fashion they were not even skilled enough in indoor craft to be able to mill their own grain. It was infinitely easier, and more the part of wisdom, too, to send these materials to the nearest craftsmen for conversion than to try making themselves jacks of all trades.

Constructive industries fitted to use these materials were already established back East. And here were the railways ready for service. So the farmer put his raw hides on board cars, and in due time there came boots and shoes, gloves, harness, incomparably better than anything his own clumsy artifice could contrive. Under the old conditions there was genuine economy. Cost? Well, it did, something; but it was a service the pioneer farmer could not get along without. And so, logically, wisely, he did the same thing with his wool, his rough lumber, his ores.

Multiply one farmer by millions, extend this condition till it covers the whole of the great interior basin, and it is clear enough why the interior continued for so long to produce raw materials and nothing else. Clear enough, too, why these east and west railways became so powerful. Predatory grip? It was nothing of the sort; it was the grip given by indispensable service.

But in the mean time manufacturing industry was moving to the westward also. Not in long, reckless leaps, but far and safely in the wake of the land hunters. One by one sagacious pioneer makers of finished products crept quietly from New York and Massachusetts and Pennsylvania into eastern Ohio, then on into Indiana, then to Illinois and on to the Mississippi, moving with all caution, seeking for closer contact with the sources of their raw materials. Success was won. There grew up in those Middle Western states long chains of sound industrial communities, firmly knit together by the railways into east and west lines. With the waterway of the Great Lakes to supplement the rails that east and west direction of commerce took on the appearance of having been divinely ordained. At any rate, it became the established order of things. Few were bold enough to argue seriously that a time for change would come.

That time has come. Since the beginning of this century there have been plenty of signs—not cryptic handwriting on the wall, which only a seventh son might decipher, but signs of the plainest. And now the experience of enforced service in the world war has brought "The Day" to this interior empire.

Independence of the East? No, not merely; something greater. Supremacy over the East in an industrial rivalry? No, nor that. Rather the building of a great industrial structure to which all national industrial experience has been steadily pointing; a structure not to be jealously bounded and safeguarded by the rim of the basin, but an integral part of the national structure, truly American and dedicated to the broadest of human service.

After the Balance?

Do you appreciate that it is long since we have been talking of the westward tide of migration save in terms of the past? Look again at the map and you will see that since 1890 the centre of population has hung close to one spot, just south of Indianapolis. The meaning of that is plain. The land hunters have finished their pioneering; the lands of the great basin are occupied. That has been true for almost thirty years. Centres will shift a little from time to time; not much. Density of population has just about come to a balance, east and west; the next marked shift will be to the southward.

And slowly constructive industry has been catching up with the westward movement of the first migrants. In the ten years covered by the last census period the value of manufactures in the twenty-one interior states increased 88 per cent, as compared with the preceding ten years, whereas the value of output of New England and the Middle Atlantic states increased but 55 per cent.

Those figures are for the time before the world war. The demands of war have given an incredibly strong impulse to manufacturing in all this region, perhaps not in relative increase over the East, but in actual increase of volume of output; and, what is more important, this service has given sudden new firmness to the whole industrial fabric of the West. The people have found out, beyond all doubt, that they can do big things in a big way, efficiently, economically. They served the emergencies of war well, now they are going on with what is so admirably begun.

With this basin the seat of a large and enormously increasing part of the national output of finished products for the world markets—then what? Slowly, but with all the certainty of Fate itself, productive industry in this region is re-forming itself into a new line, a north and south line, paralleling the line of centres of production of raw materials and paralleling the great natural outlet to Gulf waters.

Don't you see what that means? Not by virtue of any human contrivance, but under the irresistible impulse of sound economy, traffic in the products of this interior empire destined for the outside world will follow, not the east and west route of tradition to Atlantic ports, but the low resistance and low cost route of the valley itself.

Do not misunderstand. This is not dependent upon a deep waterway project for the Mississippi River. It isn't a question at all of boat transportation in competition with rail. But water or rail, one or both, this way lies the maximum of efficiency with the maximum of economy. There is a combination which cannot possibly be ignored.

Of course this implies a mighty organic change in the Mississippi Valley. That change is under way to-day. No longer are these people dreaming and murmuring of a great time to come but yet afar off; they are actually at work to-day. Change is everywhere, from the Canadian border to Gulf tidewater.

What do they see, these people? They see this basin dominant in American industry; they see this valley the world's mightiest pathway for world commerce; they see up and down the valley a chain of interlocked industrial communities of inviolable strength; they see at the mouth of the valley, at Gulf tidewater—at New Orleans—a world port second to none.

They are not merely visioning, they are building.